

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for licensing time-based software comprising the steps of:

loading time-based software onto a client machine, wherein said time-based software submits user information to an authentication server through a network;

5 determining if the user is approved, wherein if the user is approved,

further comprising the step of:

the authentication server activating the time-based software for an amount of time approved.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein if the user is not approved, further comprising the step of sending a rejection message back to the software.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of determining if the user is approved further comprises the steps of:

matching the user information with a user account stored in said authentication server; and

checking the user account for a time credit amount, wherein the user is approved if the user information matches the user account and the time credit amount is greater than zero.

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4. The method of claim 1, wherein said user information comprises a user name, a password, and an amount of time requested.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein if the user uses the time-based software for less than the amount of time approved, further comprising the step of crediting any remaining amount of time back to the authentication server.

5 6. The method of claim 1, wherein the network comprises the Internet.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of the time-based software submitting user information to the authentication server further comprises submitting order information to the authentication server, said order information comprising a software product ID and a client machine IP address.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the time-based software displays a log-in access box for requesting the user information, the log-in access box including a balance checking feature for allowing the user to check a total amount of time remaining in a user account

9. The method of claim 1, wherein if the user is approved, further comprising the step of updating a time credit amount in the authentication server.

20 10. The method of claim 3, wherein if the time credit is greater than or equal to the amount of time requested, the amount of time approved comprises the amount of time requested.

11. The method of claim 3, wherein if the time credit is less than the amount of time requested, the amount of time approved comprises the time credit.

12. A program storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by machine to perform the method steps for licensing time-based software comprising the steps of:

loading time-based software onto a client machine, wherein said time-based software submits the user information to an authentication server through a network;

determining if the user is approved, wherein if the user is approved, further comprising the step of:

the authentication server activating the time-based software for an amount of time approved.

13. The program storage device of claim 12, wherein the step of determining if the user is approved further comprises the steps of:

matching the user information with a user account stored in said authentication server; and

checking the user account for a time credit amount, wherein the user is approved if the user information matches the user account and the time credit amount is greater than zero.

14. The program storage device of claim 12, wherein said user information comprises a user name, a password, and an amount of time requested.

15. The program storage device of claim 12, wherein if the user uses the time-based software for less than the amount of time approved, further comprising the step of crediting any remaining amount of time back to the authentication server.

5 16. The program storage device of claim 12, wherein the network comprises the Internet.

17. The program storage device of claim 12, wherein if the user is approved, further comprising the step of updating a time credit amount in the authentication server.

18. The program storage device of claim 12, wherein the step of the time-based software submitting user information to the authentication server further comprises submitting order information to the authentication server, said order information comprising a software product ID and a client machine IP address.

19. The program storage device of claim 12, wherein the time-based software displays a log-in access box for requesting the user information, the log-in access box including a balance checking feature for allowing the user to check a total amount of time remaining in a user account

20 20. The program storage device of claim 13, wherein if the time credit is greater than or equal to the amount of time requested, the amount of time approved comprises the amount of time requested.

21. The program storage device of claim 13, wherein if the time credit is less than the amount of time requested, the amount of time approved comprises the time credit.

22. A system for licensing time-based software comprising:

a time-based software loaded onto a client machine; and

an authentication server for receiving user information from said time-based software, wherein said authentication server determines if a user is approved, wherein if the user is approved, the authentication server activates the time-based software for an amount of time approved.

23. The system of claim 22, wherein the authentication server determines if the user is approved by matching the user information with a user account stored in said authentication server, and checking the user account for a time credit amount, wherein the user is approved if the user information matches the user account and the time credit amount is greater than zero.

24. The system of claim 22, wherein if the user uses the time-based software for less than the amount of time approved, any remaining amount of time is credited back to the authentication server.

25. The system of claim 22, wherein the authentication server further receives order information from the time-based software, said order information comprising a software product ID and a client machine IP address.

26. The system of claim 22, wherein the time-based software displays a log-in access box for requesting the user information, the log-in access box including a balance checking feature for allowing the user to check a total amount of time remaining in a user account

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27. The system of claim 22, wherein if the user is approved, further comprising the step of updating a time credit amount in the authentication server.

28. The system of claim 23, wherein if the time credit amount is greater than or equal to the amount of time requested, the amount of time approved comprises the amount of time requested.

29. The system of claim 23, wherein if the time credit amount is less than the amount of time requested, the amount of time approved comprises the time credit amount.

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